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DE RUEHLGB #1027/01 3001049  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 271049Z OCT 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3388  
INFO RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA 1567  
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM 0766  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1470  
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0133  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0638  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0056

C O N F I D E N T I A L KIGALI 001027

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2016  
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH MONUC AND UN GROUP OF EXPERTS

Classified By: POLOFF GLEARNED, REASON 1.4 (D)

¶1. (U) On 20 October Ambassador had separate meetings with the Chairman of the UN DRC Group of Experts (GOE) Ambassador Ibra Ka and MONUC Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) Haile Menkerios. Ka and Menkerios

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updated Ambassador on the status of their respective missions and noted that Rwanda continued to improve its standing with MONUC and the GOE as indicated by its support and compliance with the two missions' requirements. Ka reported that the GOR had fully complied with GOE requests regarding ongoing investigations and Menkerios noted that Rwanda's role during the DRC election period has been positive. End summary.

¶2. (U) Background. Under the auspices of UN Security Resolution 1654, the DRC Group of Experts investigates and reports on arms embargo violations in the DRC. The Group consists of experts on arms trafficking, finance, aviation and customs and border control. Ambassador Ka makes regular visits to Embassy Kigali when he is in Rwanda, the last in April 2006. The GOE released its latest report on 18 July 2006, shortly after, the UNSC extended its mandate to 30 July 2007. End background.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Ka, accompanied by political affairs officer Manuel Bressan, provided a brief update on the recent work of the GOE, including a section in the latest report on the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Ambassador Ka described a problem with the Ugandan Defense Minister not allowing the GOE to conduct an investigation at Entebbe, but said "things are improving very well" with Rwanda. He said some of the GOE members were currently conducting investigations in Rwanda, including inspecting cargo manifests and flight itineraries, and that "Rwanda was abiding very positively."

¶4. (C) Ambassadors Ka and Arietti agreed that the regular conduct of cross border trade was robust, natural and positive but the key problem to be resolved is ensuring that duties and tariffs are collected by proper GDRC authorities. Ka observed that the majority of the FDLR's financial resources did not come from the Diaspora in Europe or North America, but from illicit economic activities in occupied areas inside the DRC. Ka was generous in his praise of Ambassadors Meece and Swing and extended his appreciation for the continual assistance of the USG to the GOE.

15. (C) In a later meeting with DSRSG Menkerios, MONUC Head of Kigali Office Slobodan Kotevski and Special Advisor to the DSRSG Eric Mbok, Ambassador noted the GOR's support of the DRC election process and reiterated the USG's commitment to the Tripartite Plus process. The DSRSG agreed that the Tripartite Plus was an important mechanism for the region and expressed hope that the Fusion Cell would continue to receive enough support from the member countries to make it work. He predicted that Kabila would win the presidential election but doubted he would carry Kinshasa- a dynamic that could cause problems in his governance. According to Menkerios, Bemba would vigorously protest but his options were limited as he did a poor job of maintaining the support of the majority of his militia.

16. (C) When asked about the FDLR, Menkerios said that Kabila recognizes the problem and has indicated to MONUC that he will "deal with it" when/if elected. (Note. Menkerios used the term "interahamwe" several times in reference to the FDLR. End note.) Menkerios thought it would be necessary to kill FDLR leadership, but, with improvements in the FARDC, it was possible. However, he stated flatly that "it was impossible for the FARDC to impact the Lord's Resistance Army."

17. (C) Menkerios agreed that tensions were currently higher between the governments of Uganda and the DRC than the GOR and GDRC and said that Rwanda's role since 2004 in the region had steadily improved. He said the GOR was playing a low key and helpful role during the election period and noted that legal cross border trade between Rwanda and DRC was a key to future progress. SRSR Menkerios was scheduled to meet with President Kagame on 20 Oct.

18. (U) Comment. Both meetings reinforced post's perception that the GOR recognizes that it is in its best interest to cooperate with the UN GOE and MONUC. End comment.  
ARIETTI